



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Daniel Boone  
National Forest

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Dear Forest User:

It is with great pleasure that I announce the release of the Revised Forest Plan for the Daniel Boone National Forest and provide you with a copy of the Plan, the Final Environmental Impact Statement, and the Record of Decision. You will find a CD with digital copies of all of these documents and color maps. These same files and other supporting information can be found on our web site at <http://www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/boone/>.

As you probably know, the development of this Revised Plan has been underway for many years. A host of natural resource professionals have assisted with the planning process, and they have diligently sought out the available science to use in addition to public input. This mix of scientific expertise and diverse public views has resulted in a management plan that strikes an appropriate balance between the need to sustain, and in some cases restore, valued forest resources and the need to provide a variety of human uses of the forest.

We have attempted to focus the public discourse and management direction of the Revised Plan around the desired conditions for the national forest. Doing so has resulted in a Plan that emphasizes important conditions such as high quality water, a broad diversity of habitats, healthy and resilient forest vegetation, rare communities that are restored and protected, and a national forest that is mostly natural appearing to the millions of visitors that come for recreation each year.

A variety of desired conditions have been allocated by zoning the National Forest, using 21 specific management emphases, or prescriptions. Appropriate areas of the Daniel Boone will be managed to emphasize important resource values such as source water for domestic consumption, wilderness, lake-based recreation, and a diversity of habitats. The types of habitat that will be targeted for management include those needed by plant and animal species associated with riparian and aquatic areas, clifflines, very young forests, and old growth or interior forest conditions.

Over 1,100 citizens, agencies, and organizations have provided input on our Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Revised Forest Plan. We have considered each comment that was submitted and as a result, have made a number of changes to improve both the Plan and the environmental impact statement. With these changes made, overall forest management direction remains essentially the same as in the draft that was released last May. Most of the changes were corrected errors, clarified information, strengthening of the environmental analysis, improved readability, and reinforced management direction.

Many of the responses that were received advocated the selection of a different alternative from the one proposed and argued against certain management practices, including commercial logging and prescribed burning. I realize these opinions are heartfelt, but I cannot agree with them.

The Daniel Boone National Forest must be managed within the legal framework that was established for the creation and management of the national forest system. Over the past century, as the national forest system has grown to 191 million acres, legislation concerning the management of national forests has repeatedly emphasized multiple-use. The various uses codified in this legislative history include watershed protection, timber production, wildlife habitat, mineral production, wilderness, and recreation. Most recently, in 2003, Congress passed the Healthy Forests Restoration Act to facilitate management actions that are necessary to improve the health of national forests. The Daniel Boone



National Forest should have a management plan that reflects the multiple-use purpose given by American citizens through Congress.

The notion that our national forests can take care of themselves without human intervention is erroneous. The Forest you see today is very much a result of human intervention. Prior to becoming a national forest, these lands were cut over and burned frequently. Today, due to a lack of fire and thinning, the trees are smaller and more crowded than before and less able to resist insect and disease. Non-native invasive species inadvertently introduced to North America from overseas have already led to the loss of the American chestnut tree from Kentucky's forests, and other invasive species such as the hemlock wooly adelgid and the gypsy moth threaten to further alter forest ecosystems and change the inherent character of the Daniel Boone National Forest. The continued exclusion of fire, a force that played a very prominent role in shaping the character of the eastern Kentucky forests for thousands of years, will also impact forest character.

Without active management the Daniel Boone National Forest will change in ways that few desire. We stand to lose many of the oak trees and wildlife species that depend on them for food and shelter. We are finding fewer oak seedlings on the forest floor. Science has shown that oaks need more open conditions to grow. With active management, including timber harvesting and prescribed burning, we may be able to forestall or even halt some of these changes. Carefully planned and managed harvests can generate seedlings to replace overstory trees that could be lost to catastrophic disturbances such as the gypsy moth, and thinnings can improve the growth and vigor of trees that are left to grow.

Under the Revised Forest Plan, the primary use of tree cutting will be to improve the resilience of the forest and to enhance wildlife habitat. The amount of timber harvesting carried out under the Revised Plan may be considerably less than the objectives that were set in the 1985 Plan it replaces. Even so, harvesting is a cost efficient tool for achieving important management objectives. We will also be able to provide forest products that help meet the nation's demand for timber and contribute to local economies. We could choose to leave the forest alone, but our analysis shows that we would lose the diversity of plant and animal life that exists today. As national forest managers, we cannot allow this.

Our natural resource professionals will be actively monitoring our progress while carrying out the management direction of the Revised Forest Plan. We will be evaluating new information and scientific advances that are relevant to our management and will adapt the Plan as needed. All future modifications of the Revised Forest Plan will be subject to public review and input.

The release of the Revised Forest Plan signals the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Daniel Boone National Forest. I strongly feel that we have found an appropriate balance between diverse public values and our stewardship responsibilities. I hope you will continue to stay involved as we plan and design the projects to implement this Plan. The Daniel Boone is a *National* Forest, and all Americans have a stake in its future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben T. Worthington", with a stylized, flowing script.

BENJAMIN T. WORTHINGTON  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures